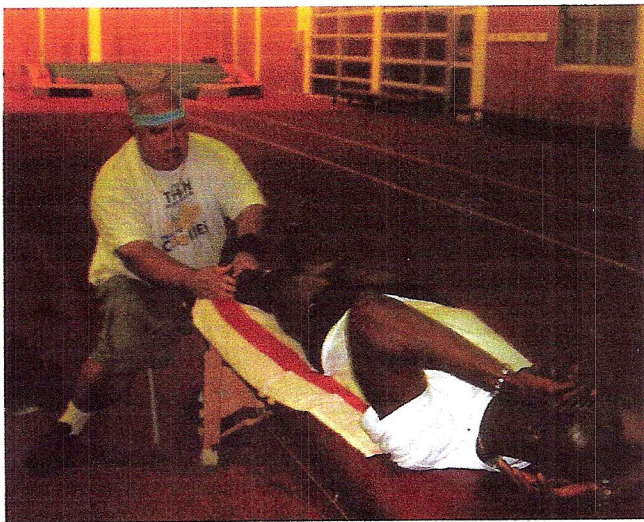


For those who know the Athletics circuit, Andrew Miller is a common reassuring face. For the athletes who keep the sport alive, he is the must-have sports therapist. Chris Turner tells the amazing story of this gentle giant with healing hands.

Photos © Andrew Miller

Andrew Miller has table, will travel, will heal



Air travel is exhausting and stressing. The weight of a protective hard skin suitcase, let alone its intended contents tends to weigh more than the standard 20-25kg baggage allowance. Then there is the usual clenched teeth check-in discussion where the traveller tries to convince a harassed member of the airline's staff that a flexible suit-bag, a carrier bag of duty-free and a laptop case can in tandem constitute "one piece of hand luggage only".

Yet most of the world doesn't know what travelling stress is about. They add a "collapsible bed" - which some people

license there, "a massage table" - to your luggage weight list the next time you fly.

That item constitutes the most essential element on the packing inventory of Andrew Miller, who is one of the world's most renowned sports therapists. The 53-year-old who resides in Phoenix has been working in international athletics since the 1976 Olympic Games - experiencing to a total of six Olympics - and from the Gothenburg World Championships of 1995 travelling year-in, year-out, around nearly the entire circuit. That is an awful lot of airport check-ins, a lot of outsize-luggage carousels, and nights spent in anonymous universally decorated hotel rooms.

In that time many of the world's top athletes have come to depend on Miller making "the flight". At the Athens Olympic Games alone, he worked on the injuries and concerns of the winners of six individual gold medals. Names such as Veronica Campbell (200m), Tonique Williams-Darling (400m), Hicham El Guerrouj (1500m/5000m), Felix Sanchez (400m Hurdles), Dwight Phillips (Long Jump). We could also mention another six Athens individual minor medallists, or another sixth fourth placers or the work Miller performed on the medal winning Jamaican women relay squads (gold and bronze), and half the members of the USA men's and women's 4x400m quartets (both gold).

